

PRESIDENTS' ALLIANCE | ON HIGHER EDUCATION AND IMMIGRATION

June 13, 2018

“Student Visa Integrity: Protecting Educational Opportunity and National Security”
Senate Committee on the Judiciary Subcommittee on Border Security and Immigration
June 6, 2018

Statement of the Presidents’ Alliance on Higher Education and Immigration

The [Presidents’ Alliance on Higher Education and Immigration](https://www.presidentsimmigrationalliance.org) is a non-partisan alliance of currently more than 365 college and university presidents and chancellors, representing public and private institutions from across the nation. We are dedicated to increasing public understanding of how immigration policies and practices impact our students, campuses, and communities and to supporting policies that create welcoming environments for Dreamer, other immigrant, and international students on our campuses. We are writing today to express our support for policies that emphasize the importance of continuing to welcome international students to our campuses in order to protect our long-term national security, economic, and academic interests.

We were pleased that the Subcommittee's June 6th hearing entitled, “Student Visa Integrity: Protecting Educational Opportunity and National Security,” drew a clear distinction between those few individuals who would seek to pose threats to these interests and the vast majority of international students and scholars who come to our higher education institutions to learn, conduct research, and contribute to American innovation. U.S. colleges and universities excel because we can attract talent from everywhere. Our campuses are dedicated to attracting, educating, and graduating students from all backgrounds and places, and our institutions can attest to the vital contributions of our international students and scholars on our campuses and in our communities.

In our [June 12, 2018 letter](#) to Members of the Senate and House with regard to DACA and other immigration measures, we noted that our educational institutions are committed to educating anyone with the talent and drive to learn and to contribute to making the world a better place – whether a native born, immigrant or an international student. In addition to advocating for a permanent solution for Dreamers, we urge rejecting policy proposals that will make U.S. higher education institutions less desirable for international students:

“U.S. institutions’ ability to attract the most talented students and scholars in the world – students whose work helps sustain our academic pre-eminence and who often remain to continue their research or to found or help lead America’s most innovative companies – is not foreordained. It is a competitive advantage that benefits our nation today, but that can be lost to

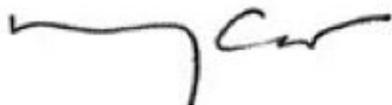
competitor countries and institutions that offer more favorable immigration policies and are eager to build their academic and research prowess and fuel their innovation economies.”

We appreciated that the June 6th hearing highlighted this important concern. Senator Cornyn’s opening remarks stated that the American higher education system is considered the “Crown Jewels” of what the United States has to offer the world and is vital to diplomatic efforts. He went on to say, “I am not interested in restricting student visas...I have long been an advocate for expanding H-1B visas and other visas for foreign students.” Senator Durbin highlighted sobering statistics, noting, “We’ve seen new international student enrollment drop by 3% this year across U.S. higher education institutions, and that number is expected to double next year, while other countries are seeing double-digit increases.”

Additionally, as Jill Welch, Deputy Executive Director for Public Policy at NAFSA, testified before the Subcommittee: “our academic institutions and our economy depend on the presence of international students and scholars to create jobs, drive innovation and research, and broaden the perspectives of American students (p. 10 of Welch’s [statement](#), June 6, 2018).” Higher education institutions across the country have benefited intellectually, economically, and socially from the presence of international students and scholars, and they in turn often serve as America’s best ambassadors and allies.

We urge careful study of existing security protocols and procedures and awareness of the global competition for talent to avoid overly broad action that would jeopardize these valuable national assets and encourage the Subcommittee to partner with higher education to ensure appropriate coordination. We offer our assistance in these vital objectives and are happy to work with you to continue to develop and refine sensible and secure practices.

Sincerely,



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